

My Breed of Choice: The Appaloosa

Out of all the breeds I have encountered in my decade of riding, only one stands out: the Appaloosa. Not just because of the coloring, either. All the Appaloosas I have had the pleasure of knowing are the cleverest, brightest horses out there. Appaloosas are amazing - they excel in any event you put them in: driving, jumping, speed, pleasure, dressage, and even racing. Given the option of choosing a horse to work with, I would choose an Appaloosa every time. (It does not hurt that my first lesson horse was an Appaloosa!) There are three notable Appaloosas I personally know that illustrate the remarkable versatility of this wonderful breed. One is a fourteen-year-old red roan gelding, one is a twelve-year-old cremello mare, and one is a ten-year-old champagne palomino mare. All three horses display not only the physical attributes of the breed, but the level-headed temperament attributed to Appaloosas as well.

Hank: I could go on about this horse for quite a while. The aforementioned Appaloosa that was my first lesson horse – that was Hank. An extremely handsome red roan whose coat seems to grow whiter every year, Hank defines my standards of a great Appaloosa. We have been together for ten years now and he never ceases to amaze me. A hoss of gelding - standing in at around 16 hands - he is the epitome of a gentle giant. He has given countless babies and toddlers their first rides. He has taught many young – and older – lesson takers the basics of riding. Hank is not just your typical lesson horse, though. Through the past eight years of showing he has achieved accolades from several local saddle clubs in various events, including halter, Western Pleasure, and English riding. Besides his versatility and temperament, Hank also displays another Appaloosa attribute: brains. Hank is an extremely clever horse, picking up on complex maneuvers such as side passing and flying lead changes quickly. In fact, we taught him how to side pass before a trail class in less than ten minutes! Hank has taught me nearly

everything I know about riding, showing, and horse care in general. Hank encourages me to learn new things to teach him and is always willing to try those new things. He is one of those “once in a lifetime” horses you hear about; the horse that is always willing to please yet also challenges you to learn something new every time you are near him. Hank displays the versatility of the Appaloosa, one of the many things I love about the breed.

Selene: Hank’s full sister. Although she doesn’t have the visible characteristics of the Appaloosa (as her brother does), Selene manages to display the Appaloosa character in other ways. A beautiful cremello with bright blue eyes (who just got her dapples last year!), Selene is quite the mare. She can be a feisty little Appy at times, but she always returns to her easy-going self quickly. Like her brother, she is incredibly smart and is great with smaller children. In fact, we recently started using her for unicorn photoshoots – the little girls are always in awe of “Selene the Unicorn.” Thanks to her easy-going temperament and her stunning cremello color, she makes the perfect unicorn. Despite not being able to show or give lessons (due to her sensitivity to bright light), Selene carries her own accolades by giving small children the opportunity to meet a “real-life unicorn.”

April: the English mare with ApHC points. A gorgeous long-legged champagne palomino who seems to float when she trots, April illustrates the physical qualities of the Appaloosa. She was the first Appaloosa I had the pleasure of showing at a breed show. I started working with her to give Hank a year-long break from the show ring. We focused mainly on the halter and hunter-in-hand classes our first show. Although we did not win any of our classes, April showed me how quick she was at picking up new things and how willing she was to try them. April is incredibly smart and extremely patient, but she also has a playful side that comes out when you least expect it. Recently that playful side came out with another rider at the barn - unexpectedly,

of course. This mare likes to keep you on your toes, something that is refreshing after working with the tried-and-true Hank.

Needless to say, Appaloosas are definitely my breed of choice. No other breed has the amount of personality as the Appaloosa, whether it be coat color(s) or temperament. These horses have a uniqueness that I have not seen in any other breed. Appaloosas hold a special place in my heart, thanks to my dear Appaloosa Hank. In my opinion, Appys are beautiful inside and out, and I have never met an Appaloosa I did not like.